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AUTHOR Pruitt, Anne S.
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ABSTRACT

Peer review of college faculty is discussed from the perspective of an administrator who reviews promotion and tenure documents at the central university level. Attention is directed to: the rationale for peer review, qualities of an effective teacher, sources of information available to colleagues, an example of a peer review system at The Ohio State University's (OSU) Faculty of Management and Human Resources, and a suggestion for needed research. At OSU, faculty are advised to base their opinions of colleagues on: (1) visiting classes and lectures presented to the public or professional societies; (2) review of documents such as syllabi, term papers, reading lists, and examinations; (3) development by the candidate of new and effective techniques of instruction and instructional materials; (4) review of publications by the candidate on the teaching of appropriate discipline in respected journals devoted to pedagogy; (5) recognitions or awards for distinguished teaching; and (6) review of the opinions of graduates who have achieved professional success, and the number and caliber of students guided in research by the candidate. A primary concern is that the information on candidates be valid and reliable, and that the process is fair. (SW)

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Title: Colleagues as Sources of Evidence and Evaluators of Teaching Performance in Personnel Decisions

Author: Anne S. Pruitt, Assocaite Provost and
Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership

Address: Anne S. Pruitt
The Ohio State University
203 Bricker Hall
190 North Oval Mall
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Time: 4:05-6:05 p.m., Thursday, April 17, 1986

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COLLEAGUES AS SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AND EVALUATORS OF TEACHING PERFORMANCE IN PERSONNEL DECISIONS

Anne S. Pruitt, Associate Provost
The Ohio State University

"Peer review is the practice of having one's professional or intellectual cohort scrutinize the quality of one's work...." (Ceci and Peters, 1982).

Universities are obligated to evaluate faculty members on three traditional responsibilities: teaching, research, and service. Many believe that research is the one that is most easily evaluated and certainly it seems to be the most valued for advancement in the academic community. Service carries less weight than either research or teaching, but can be fairly easily documented.

Teaching, however, is another matter. Although we value effective teaching, we are less certain when it comes to providing objective systems for assessing it. Moreover, we debate the relative importance of teaching and research, particularly in the research university. If a faculty member who has excelled in research and not in teaching is being reviewed for promotion and tenure, that person is likely to be promoted and awarded tenure, whereas the converse is highly unlikely.

My consideration of peer or colleague review will include a discussion of the rationale for peer review; qualities of an effective teacher; sources of information available to colleagues; a university-wide perspective; an example of a peer review system at The Ohio State University; and a suggestion for needed research.

In view of the fact that departments vary with respect to the ranks of those who take part in personnel decisions, I will use the terms "colleagues" and "peers" as synonyms. My reference will be to all members of a faculty member's department regardless of rank. Although I will focus on peer evaluation for personnel decisions, it should be understood that a proper system of faculty evaluation is one in which both summative evaluation and formative evaluation go hand in hand. My perspective will be that of an administrator who reviews promotion and tenure documents at the central university level.

Rationale

It goes without question that faculty members have the right and responsibility to review the teaching performance of their colleagues. This assumption also varies by department. The concepts of the "community of scholars" and "collegium" provide long-standing historical justification for this practice (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker and Riley, 1978).

If there is any resentment among faculty, it derives from the concept that professionals such as professors require work autonomy. Their competence rests on expertise gained through long years of preparation. They want to exercise their academic freedom and they want managers to leave them alone. They gain satisfaction from the freedom they have to control what they teach and how they teach (Memo to the Faculty, 1978).

There is another reason why we ought to have colleague review. Administrators sometimes rely on hearsay and second hand information which in turn lead to charges of favoritism (Weinbach and Randolph, 1984). We can improve the credibility of departmental ratings by providing for faculty participation.

The likelihood of litigation provides still another support for peer review. Administrators are apt to be accused of favoritism and arbitrariness if the opinions of peers are excluded. Reviews by peers are influenced by subjective impressions and by departmental jealousies and by gossip. If the procedures to be suggested below for improving reliability, validity and fairness, are used, we ought to minimize such problems.

Qualities of an Effective Teacher

In what areas do we look for the qualities of an effective teacher? The list generated by Wilson and his colleagues (Wilson, Dienst, and Watson, 1973) is useful. It includes research activity and

recognition, participation in the academic community, intellectual breadth, relations with students, and concern for teaching.

These qualities have been spelled out in The Ohio State University (OSU) Faculty Handbook as follows:

> "the candidate's command of the appropriate subject; continuous growth in the field; ability to organize material and to present it with logic and conviction; capacity to awaken in students an awareness of the relationship of the subject to other fields of knowledge; objectivity; the creativity, spirit, and enthusiasm which vitalize candidate's learning and teaching; ability to arouse curiosity in beginning students and to stimulate advanced students to creative work; personal attributes as they affect teaching and students; and the extent and skill of participation in the general guidance and advising of students" (2.a.15).

Sources of Information Available to Colleagues

The OSU Faculty Handbook advises the faculty to base their opinions in part on:

1. Class visitation, attendance at the candidate's public lectures or lectures before professional societies, or on the result of the candidate's teaching in courses prerequisite to those of other members of the department;

2. Review of documents such as syllabi, term papers, reading lists and examinations;

3. Development by the candidate of new and effective techniques of instruction and instructional materials, particularly when evidenced by acceptance at other universities;

4. Review of publications by the candidate on the teaching of the appropriate discipline in respected journals devoted to pedagogy;

5. Recognitions or awards for distinguished teaching;

6. In addition, and of particular significance in appointment or promotion to the rank of professor, are review of (a) the opinions of graduates who have achieved notable professional success since leaving the university and (b) the number as well as caliber of students guided in research by the candidate and of those attracted to the campus by the candidate's repute as a leader.

Candidates for promotion and tenure should be responsible for collecting these materials and packaging them for review by the department. However, the department chairperson, or chairperson of the Promotion and Tenure Committee should provide guidance in the proper preparation of these materials.

A University-wide Perspective

What we are most interested in at the central administration level, and at the individual faculty member level as well, is that evaluations be reliable and valid and that the procedures are fair. Suggestions are made throughout the literature that we can contribute to meeting these

standards by anonymity of raters, by selection of the raters by both the candidate and the chairperson of the department, and by the use of ad hoc committees (French-Lazovik, 1981). It is both costly and time consuming to carry out these procedures.

The literature suggests that we can increase the reliability of colleagues as sources of evidence if we make sure that a group or committee of colleagues participate. There is also some evidence that suggests that colleagues ought to be trained for these responsibilities. For these reasons it is probably wise to limit the number of faculty members to be evaluated each year.

Occasions may arise where colleagues evaluation of a peer's teaching performance varies with evaluations made by students. There is no problem in resolving such a conflict because students view teaching from a different perspective. Students have had a lot of exposure to the faculty member and are consumers of the teaching product. They can be reliable judges of the quality of the performance in the classroom. However, faculty members are the primary judges of a colleague's command of the subject matter. One should also recognize that a faculty member's success is likely to vary with the level of students taught, their ages, size of class enrollment and whether or not the course is required.

Example of a Peer Review System

Let me give as an example a technique for peer review of teaching that is used in The Ohio State University Faculty of Management and Human Resources (Bobbitt, n.d.). The acronym is "START". It stands for service, teaching, and research tracks. For our purposes only the section devoted to teaching will be described. The candidate is first asked to list regular class sections taught last spring through winter quarter, to give the number of undergraduates, masters and Ph.D. students, course credit hours, the number of students present at the third week, the number of student credit hours, and to comment on any special time requirements for this course offering, such as grading projects and weekly assignments. Second, the faculty member is asked to separately list continuing education courses taught last spring through winter quarter and to provide information on the number of students enrolled and the approximate total time for preparation and administration, attendance and presentation. Third, the faculty member is asked to indicate any courses that were being offered for the first time by the college or the institution offering the course. Fourth, the faculty member is asked to indicate any of those courses which he or she was teaching for the first time personally. The next set of information requested is any new material, such as lecture notes, cases, computer programs, etc., new pedagogical techniques, and other innovations used. For example, applications submitted for instructional grants. Next, the faculty member is asked to indicate any course coordination responsibilities that he or she has assumed,

such as coordinating sections of a multiple section course. The next piece of information is to indicate any of those courses which were overload or extra pay assignments. The last item requested is to provide information on the number of students the faculty member has dealt with in such categories as general counseling, independent study courses, major advisor to Ph.D. students, minor advisor, committees, and masters advisors.

The information entered on this form is reviewed by a sub-committee composed both of colleagues recommended by the candidate and those appointed by the chairperson. An interview is held with the faculty member, and a final summary is presented to the promotion and tenure committee.

This procedure is characterized by an comprehensive examination of a number of components of the teaching function. It is not limited to class visitations as is the case where this system is the sale data collection device. It is part of the whole style of departmental administration.

Needed Research

The concern that I have about employing any system of peer review revolves around the ability to get the members of a faculty to feel a sense of ownership. It is crucial that colleague evaluation be built into the culture of the department. By culture I mean a departmental

view of the problem and a body of conceptions of proper and justifiable solutions arrived at by the faculty. These views are passed along from one generation of faculty to another. They are reinforced by each succeeding generation as they pass through the same experiences. It cannot be imposed from outside, from the Office of Academic Affairs, for example. The problem is how to go from a situation where there is no peer review to one where there is. It must develop within the faculty of a given department. It will be resented if it is not; it will be considered an imposition; it will be considered snooping and will be done half heartedly, if at all. The area in which future research is needed is in the examination of the processes involved in creating a departmental culture that is receptive to peer review.

Concluding Statement

Returning then to the central administration's review of teaching for promotion and tenure, I would contend that our primary concern is to assure ourselves that the information that deans forward to us is valid, and reliable, and that the process was fair. Without a valid and reliable system, the best we can do is to look for signals of poor teaching or lack of interest and dedication to teaching and to make some rough assessment of teaching quality and quantity.

I would conclude that faculty members are in the best position to evaluate the scholarly aspects of teaching. The great worry that one has when one sits on a university-wide promotion and tenure committee

is whether or not the paper credentials give a fair analysis of the faculty member. We are keenly aware of the fact that we are dealing with the careers of men and women who have invested considerable time, money, and energy in preparation. They are among the most highly educated people in our society, and their professional future rests in large part on decisions that are made at this level. Anything that can be done to assure the reliability, validity and fairness of the procedures at the departmental level can do nothing but enhance such a system.

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